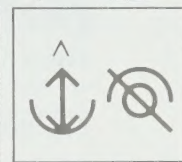
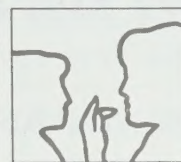


COMMUNICATING TOGETHER



A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE ABOUT AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 1

MARCH 1991



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REMEMBERING WITH A SMILE: A TRIBUTE TO KAROLY GALYAS

SHIRLEY McNAUGHTON

Karoly Galyas, Master of Science at the Department of Speech Communication and Musical Acoustics, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden died on November 23, 1990.

Karoly Galyas was born in 1936 in Hódmezővásárhely, Hungary. He moved to Sweden in 1956 where he pursued a Master of Science, which he obtained in 1963. Most of his professional career was spent at the Royal Institute of Technology where he was the leader of technical projects related to persons with speech and voice disabilities. His projects included work on artificial larynxes and more recently on speech synthesis for AAC users. His projects in this area included the use of synthetic speech with Blissymbols, synthetic speech in multi-languages, and more recently synthetic speech as an educational tool for literacy enhancement.

Karoly was active in the International Society of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) from its formation in 1983.

When news of Karoly's death reached us in November, we asked Shirley McNaughton to write about him for Communicating Together. Shirley and several ISAAC colleagues contributed their memories of this special man.

*** ** *

Who can talk without his mouth
Who can write without his hands
Who can part from his friend
Without feeling pain.

I can talk without my mouth
I can write without my hands
But I cannot part from my friend
Without feeling pain.
by Leo Leppälä

We've been parted from a friend.
We feel pain at our loss, but our memories of Karoly Galyas also bring joy. As Gregg Vanderheiden, of the TRACE Centre, Madison, Wisconsin, so aptly put it, "Just thinking about him brings a smile to my face!" And so it is with those who knew Karoly. Sheri Hunnicutt, from the Royal Institute of Tech-

nology, Stockholm, remembers him as "always enthusiastic, always encouraging, always fun to be with". His own readiness to smile helps us do the same as we remember.

Karoly Galyas was dedicated to finding ways to enable those who are unable to speak to communicate. I know he would welcome a poem by a Finnish AAC user being included in our tribute. In fact, typical of Karoly, he was the first to jump forward to help Leo Leppälä come to the platform to receive the Shirley McNaughton Exemplary Communication Award at the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) 1990 Biennial Conference in Stockholm last August. I revisit the conference through videotape from time to time, and in several sections of the tape, I see Karoly — always listening intently, always ready to help, always totally involved.

As Margareta Jennische of Sweden remembers,

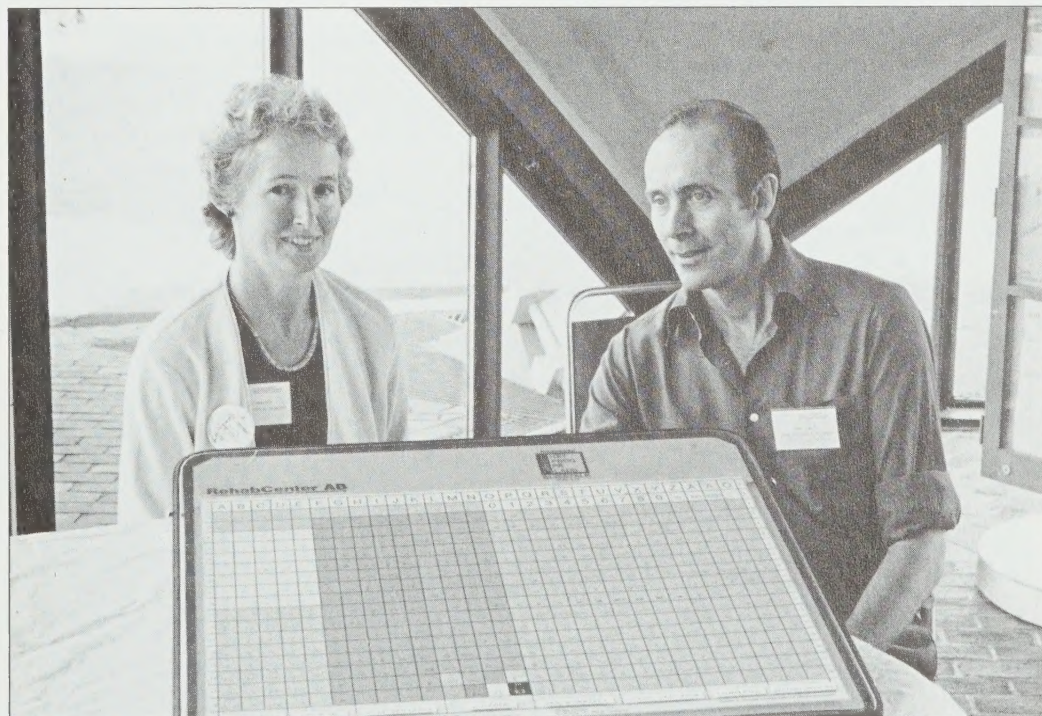
He was a good friend of all of us who are working in the field of AAC. He was always very personal, patient and positive. Everybody had confidence in him. "I can always ask Karoly; he knows and he will help"

was a phrase often heard. He turned the impossible into the possible and made everybody feel important.

A Pioneer in AAC

In a young field such as AAC, those who assisted in its birth have been like a family focused upon the welfare of its offspring. And Karoly has always been there, working hard within several organizations and nurturing AAC — in his two homelands, Sweden and Hungary, and in many other countries throughout the world.

My personal memories of Karoly go back to 1975 when a meeting of communication technology developers was sponsored in Ottawa by the National Research Council of Canada. Karoly made his professional contribution, demonstrating an artificial larynx that allowed control of both tone and pitch. Gregg Vanderheiden always associates the sound of that voice with Karoly and so do I. It was an important contribution at an early time in our field's development. But it was his caring that I remember most. Sheri Hunnicutt sums the feeling up, "The combination of Karoly's genuine interest in



Sheri Hunnicutt and Karoly displaying the BlissTalk

each user and his engineering skill was something solid that could be relied on."

And there was Karoly's gentle determination! He would share the capabilities of the Multi-Talk device, a synthetic speech breakthrough from Karoly's research team at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, whenever there was a spare moment, be it during a luncheon, a lecture, or an informal get-together late in the evening. Karoly would always carry the Multi-Talk with him — just in case there would be an opportunity to demonstrate it.

And true to character, he faced one of life's most severe challenges with the same quiet determination. As he battled with cancer during the many months preceding his death, Karoly underwent intensive medical treatment, but carefully rationed his energy, to remain focused on projects at the Royal Institute and to give leadership though his roles within ISAAC and ISAAC-Sverige. His interest in and support of the 1990 ISAAC Conference never wavered.

As Presidents Remember Him

As first president of ISAAC, I remember his enthusiastic support of our many early activities and his willing readiness to help with the extra tasks. I remember his joyful singing of Hungarian folk songs at an ISAAC Dinner in Toronto, and I remember his happy Swedish folk-dancing at the 1986 Cardiff ISAAC Conference. I remember his pride in his own family, telling us of their accomplishments when we visited his home in Stockholm, and I remember the sensitive concern he always showed for others.

The second and third presidents of ISAAC, Gunnar Fagerberg and Penny Parnes have together written the following tribute:

Karoly Galyas supported the founding meeting of ISAAC, held at East Lansing in 1983, and subsequently became a member of ISAAC's Board of Directors. He was elected to the Executive Committee and served as Secretary-Treasurer Elect and Secretary-Treasurer 1984-1988. In Sweden, Karoly Galyas was a founding member of ISAAC-Sverige and served as its first chairman. He remained



Karoly and his wife Karin at an ISSAC reception in Stockholm, 1990.

active in ISAAC and ISAAC-Sverige until his death, serving as scientific committee co-chair for the 1990 conference, and had recently been elected as a Board Director of ISAAC.

Karoly Galyas had a profound influence on our field, professionally as well as personally. His warmth, friendliness and enthusiasm made him a welcome visitor on his extensive travels in North America, Europe and South America. The field has lost a major contributor, but his work will continue through his legacy of ideas, innovations, meetings, and lectures. His spirit will always influence all who knew him.

From a Hungarian Friend

Sophia Kalman, paediatrician and AAC innovator from Hungary, has shared her memories of "her Swede":

In 1983 when I returned home to Hungary after a year in Toronto, Canada, I took an address with me. I was advised to try to get in touch with its Swedish owner. The name was definitely and undoubtedly Hungarian, but I didn't know whether he spoke our language. So I wrote my first letter to him in English, asking for his support in my efforts of introducing Blissymbolics in Hungary. In no time I got a long letter from Stockholm, written in perfect Hungarian, and one month later, in Budapest, I met personally the writer of

the letter. A very tall, very thin man, with a mild smile, humble manners, and childishly blue eyes, was giving a sparkling, witty and wise lecture in a quiet, patient voice.

He was Karoly Galyas, the Swedish son of a radio repairman from the Great Hungarian Plains. After his lecture I went to him and thanked him for his kind and supporting letter. When I asked him how I could make his stay more pleasant while in Budapest, he answered with one word: Music. Thus, the next day, for his greatest pleasure, I invited him to a concert organized especially for "connoisseurs".

So along with augmentative communication, music helped us become friends. I loved the ways he could enjoy life, despite his very serious looks. He not only loved music, he also liked to play all kinds of sports. He even came to attend my private aerobic "class" in my home, because he didn't want to lose his shape before his upcoming local basketball tournament, back home in Traby. And he needed the exercise, because he truly enjoyed the heavy Hungarian food, my roast duck and creamy walnut cake, and later in his hometown, Hódmezővásárhely, his mother's sour cream covered paprika chicken and poppy seed strudel.

Since we were both ardent and incorrigible correspondents, we were soon exchanging long, long letters. With his beautiful handwriting, Karoly kept me informed about the important events of ISAAC. But he was not afraid to be personal in his letters, and offered me an opportunity to be personal and honest with him and myself too. He was able to share the pains of his past, his present problems, and his busy plans as well.

He left Hungary, because as the son of a "bourgeois entrepreneur" (his father had a little radio repairshop), he was denied the right to university. So when the borders opened in 1956, he immediately left the country. He became a Swede, from his heart, ever so grateful to the country that accepted him without reservation and provided opportuni-

ties to develop fully his talents. Even though his wife, his children, his goals, and life style, his manners and habits, were all exceptionally Swedish, he never forgot or denied his origins. He happily took his beautiful, promising, blond Swedish children to meet their aging Hungarian grandparents, to get to know their roots.

Karoly was a scientist, humble and hard working, and not a businessman. Once he left research for a better paying job in industry, but after a few years he quit that. He wanted to *help* more than to make money. While in Stockholm, in 1986, in order to help him with the difficult job of marketing, my colleague, Peter Kristof made a fifteen minute videofilm of Karoly introducing his latest speech synthesizer. We didn't understand what he was talking about, because he talked in Swedish, but he was so sincere and convincing with his shy enthusiasm, that we felt, we surely would buy whatever he wanted to sell.

But, since we wanted his former countrymen to get his messages too, we made another film, this time in Hungarian. It is a long interview, with Karoly answering my many questions. In Hungary, this film is a constant part of every Bliss Elementary Training Course. So Karoly, with a little blush of enthusiasm on his thin face, with warmth and humour, with the calmly tutoring voice of the eternal professor, not only talks about smart computers, but gives us a lesson in humanity as well.

There is no reason to tell my next trainees that they are watching a movie of a deceased man. Let the modest scientist's words and shy smile remain timelessly lively, with Karoly, even in his death, humbly serving those in need of it.

His Legacy is Warmth and Caring

We, who knew him, will always remember the contribution he made to the field of AAC, but we will especially cherish his friendship. Karoly's fellow workers in Sweden

have warm memories of his caring. From their frequent interaction with him they can best describe the effect he had upon others. From Irene Dahl, partner in an educational project since 1983, "Karoly made others feel alive and important. He made the person next to him visible." From Sheri Hunnicutt, "Wherever we went, there were lots of hugs. Everyone recognized Karoly's true fondness for those he met, and we loved to have him there. He loved to do special things for his friends and there were numerous 'special occasions' that were celebrated just because Karoly organized them. He was never too busy to make sure that we all knew that we were special."

At the Royal Institute of Technology, they have found a unique way to pay tribute to Karoly. He was a member of the 'porridge gang' — a group of colleagues of the Royal Institute that takes turns cooking for each other. (I had the pleasure of joining them for porridge lunch many years ago.) This group usually cooks for the whole lab on Lucia day (December 13) each year, in honour of the day that 'the light returns' to Sweden. The main dish is rice-porridge. This past Lucia lunch became a memorial for Karoly, with his family joining in. Here is the tribute given by the 'porridge gang' on that occasion:

We believe that the best we can do for Karoly's memory is to try to keep the positive spirit he spread around himself where

he might be ... and in this way to let him light up the emptiness which is left after him.

We who cannot share the rice-porridge and must remember Karoly from a distance, will do our utmost to keep his light shining for all AAC users. We feel pain at the loss of a friend, but we remember with a smile!

My thanks to Gunnar Fagerberg (Sweden, currently working in Canada), Irene Dahl (Sweden), Sheri Hunnicutt (Sweden), Margareta Jennische (Sweden), Sophia Kalman (Hungary), Penny Parnes (Canada), and Gregg Vanderheiden (USA) for sharing their memories. □

Shirley McNaughton

Join ISAAC Now

The International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) offers four types of memberships:

- Student Membership
- Active Membership
- Contributing Membership
- Corporate Membership

Members of ISAAC are entitled to reduced rates for: *Communicating Together*, *Communication Outlook*, *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* (AAC journal)

For membership application and other information about ISAAC write ISAAC, P.O. Box 1762, Station R, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4G 4A3.



Karoly Galyas and Gunnar Fagerberg unfurl the ISAAC flag in Stockholm, Sweden, August 1990.

Hear Our Voices

KARI HARRINGTON



Kari Harrington was in the original Blissymbol class of 1971 at the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre. She attended elementary school at James Robinson Public School in Markham and then Langstaff Secondary School in Richmond Hill. Aside from writing this column, she works part-time for the Easter Seal Communication Institute, making presentations to schools and other organizations promoting public awareness of alternative and augmentative communication and the special needs of those without functional speech. Kari has written many poems and stories and is currently completing her first novel, Don't Shut Me Out.

Last fall, I heard about a new and exciting venture being undertaken that could be important to all users of augmentative or alternative communication (AAC) as well as to their immediate families and friends. It is Hear Our Voices (HOV), a nonprofit membership organization governed solely by consumers. In its uniquely independent way, HOV will be able to voice the very real and intense concerns of all AAC users and the significant people in their lives. "The

main purpose of HOV will be to help users of augmentative communication systems empower themselves to effect changes in their personal lives and in public policy." It also provides an opportunity for all of us to help shape the future of AAC.

Prentke Romich Company and the Semantic Compaction Systems dedicated a generous seed grant to initiate Hear Our Voices and asked David Broehl, a management consultant in public, private and volunteer enterprises, to coordinate the start-up process and to help solidify the operating base of the organization. Through a system of governance, the board of directors will establish the policies, budget and the long range plan of HOV.

It will be the responsibility of an executive director, hired by the board, to implement these policies. A board of trustees, composed of internationally known persons, will meet as needed to advise and support the board of directors in financial and public policy initiatives.

As of the writing of this article, twenty consumers including myself have consented to be charter members of the Board of Directors of Hear Our Voices. Most of us are from the United States and Canada, but Jackie Peacock from Yorkshire in the United Kingdom has joined the team — a first step to becoming international! An added note: in order to be sure that cognitively impaired users and those users under the age of eighteen are represented, certain parents or caregivers will be selected to be on the Board. It is also important to note here that in the future, a formal system to elect board members will be included in the by-laws. These by-laws have been reviewed by the present board members and will be finalized soon.

HOV Budget and Membership Benefits

Hear Our Voices will be supported by membership dues (\$10 a year), grants from foundations and businesses, government special project funding, and gifts from individuals.

The annual budget will be determined by the Board of Directors based upon the revenues received.

Each member will receive a newsletter specific to the needs and interests of AAC consumers. Active members will participate in governing the organization through the Board of Directors. When directed to do so by the board, the staff will address public policy issues, funding enhancement and group and personal concerns. The goal is for each AAC user to reach his or her full potential.

How the Board Will Function

Many of you may wonder how it will be possible to hold board meetings with such a widespread, diverse group of individuals. The logistics and cost involved to get everyone together would be awesome. Instead, board meetings will be held by mail, fax, telephone and other telecommunication technologies. There will be a "revolving agenda". Every board member can comment on each agenda item and add new items at any time. We will use a consensus decision making process and the office will receive and disseminate written materials to and from each board member. Each board member will be able to read the comments of all board members through this system and decisions can be made by consensus.

If you are interested in joining Hear Our Voices or learning more about it, please write to:
Hear Our Voices,
105 West Pine Street,
Wooster, Ohio 44691 U.S.A.

Editor's Note:

Kari is always pleased to get mail from readers around the world. If you have news or a story to share in "Family and Community", write to: Miss Kari Harrington, 16 Jonquil Crescent, Markham, Ontario Canada L3P 1T4.

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Mainstreaming the Nonspeaking Student into the Classroom

GEB VERBURG



Research and Publications is written by Geb Verburg, who has been involved in the field of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) since the mid-seventies. A cognitive scientist, Mr. Verburg is currently working as coordinator of the research in cognitive development program of the Rehabilitation Engineering Department at the Hugh MacMillan Rehabilitation Centre, Toronto.

This column is based on a Northern Ontario Teleconference session I gave last December about mainstreaming nonspeaking students into the classroom. Then, as now, I used the terms mainstreaming or integration interchangeably. I begin with a general discussion of what mainstreaming might mean to different people in different schools or institutions. I will define four levels of integration which may help you decide what level of integration your school has reached.

Later I will draw a parallel between the accessibility of our environment and the integration of AAC methods in school life. Accessibility of our physical environment is a corner of rehabilitation where a number of first victories have been achieved. Several countries have laws about accessibility of schools and/or public buildings. Most cities in North America and Europe now have curbs on their sidewalks.

I have another reason for making

a comparison between the physical accessibility of one's environment and augmentative and alternative communication. Recently a publication was released in which three excellent principles of the accessible physical environment were expressed. I would like to see these principles applied throughout rehabilitation including, of course, AAC. The title of the publication, "European Manual for an accessible built environment" (CCPT, 1990), was completed last November and presented to representatives of the European Community and the United Nations.

I found it helpful to apply the following keywords as touch stones to every environment and to every AAC communication system:

Control of the user over his or her own communication

Adaptation of the environment to the abilities of the user

Preparation of the student's communication context by the teacher

Preparation of the student in the life of the school and of the classroom.

Definition of Beginner

I define "beginners" as teachers or therapists who "get their first disabled child in their classroom or on their caseload". You may be an experienced teacher, or an experienced therapist but receiving a person with a disability in your active work environment is a challenge no matter how much experience you have with able bodied students. As a teacher who is told that one of your students for next term will be nonspeaking and/or disabled, your reaction may vary from curiosity to shock. I would find it unusual if you did not display some degree of surprise and apprehension.

It is not easy to prepare for a student with a disability, and I suggest here some ways that may help.

Each of these students requires a different approach, and for the "first time" professional, whether teacher or school support staff person I recommend the introductory text *Count Me In: A guide to teaching disabled and able-bodied children together* by Phil Blackford and Audrey King.

The Student with an AAC Device

Let's assume that the nonspeaking student has an AAC device, a letter board, word board, or Blissymbol board on his or her wheelchair, or another AAC device such as a voice output device, or computer.

If a student uses a communication device, your first task is to find out about the student, and about the AAC device. Learn what the student can do, how he or she uses the AAC device, who updates the device. How can it break down and how can it be fixed, reset, recharged? In the case of a communication board, find out how the student points to the words, letters, or symbols, and again find out who updates the board.

When a nonspeaking student has an AAC system, there is often a person (professional or parent) who is the facilitator. This person can explain the board, the communication device, the strategies, the methods of updating and can help you during your first communicative exchanges.

If, as a teacher, school principal or resource person, you encounter a student who has no AAC system, I recommend that you approach your nearest AAC assessment centre or consult the school's Speech Language Pathologist to see what services he/she can offer.

Physical Disability

In many cases nonspeaking students are also physically impaired. That has further implications for classroom participation and the student's ability to work or play in the classroom. It is difficult for a student in a wheelchair who has limited hand control to write on the blackboard, or to write at all. You as a teacher or resource person will have to decide how you want to handle such challenges. You can of course skip the disabled student in activities that require physical abilities beyond his or her skill. You can provide an able-bodied child to execute actions upon command, or you can change your routines so that the level of activity required is reduced or varies naturally among students. All these

things fall under the headings of adaptation and preparation. It is up to you to implement one of the levels of mainstreaming from "ignoring the problem" (maybe it will go away), planning marginal adaptations or a parallel program, or developing a fully integrated program.

Physical impairments may require physiotherapy, or the intervention of an occupational therapist to attain a best possible seating position so the student can be most productive with his or her hands. Seating, positioning, switch technology, accessibility, all have to do with communication. Children who are nonspeaking often have many things that need to be addressed simultaneously. You as a teacher or consultant may not be able to look after all needs, but it helps you to be aware of the larger picture.

Mainstreaming or Integration

A colleague recently commented that people have such different ideas about integration. She told how she had visited a school that the principal had assured her was accessible. When she arrived at the school in question, the student seated in her wheelchair was carried up two flights of stairs by two janitors. The student was then wheeled to her classroom but because of the narrow aisles, could only sit in the very back of the room. *That's not integration!*

One could call this *squeezing* the student into the system. Simply forcing the student to survive in an environment designed for able-bodied, speaking students is the lowest possible form of mainstreaming. I hope I am right when I say that there are not many places where this conception of mainstreaming still survives.

So far we have looked at mobility and accessibility, what about communication? The communication equivalent of this method of (non) mainstreaming is to put children in a regular classroom and let them participate only in those activities in which they are able. It is like talking to a child without the child having an option to express him/herself, without having the option to learn expressively.

Integration through Retro Fitting

The next level of mainstreaming makes adaptations to the environment. You have all seen the rickety wooden ramps, the obviously add-on elevators or hoists. You have seen the back entrance that is provided with a model ramp, however there is only one person in the whole school who uses the back entrance; he has to, and he hates it. These retro-fitted adaptations stick out so badly that you or I would be uncomfortable using them. The users are, of course, also embarrassed but they have no choice.

In a communication context, retro-fitting is what we do most of the time. The person is unable to speak and so we have to add things to that person, we have to retro-fit him or her. In some instances we can operate on the larynx or implant an artificial one. But in most cases such an operation would not work and we have to provide an add-on voice output device or a communication board. These devices do not yet look as if they are a part of the person; they always look added on, retro-fitted, not a part of the person's body or necessary living environment. They are essential, yet we have not managed to make the device become an integrated part of the person. We have not even learned to hide (tuck away, miniaturize) the devices so that they do not make the user look more impaired than necessary.

Integration via Hidden Adaptations

In newer buildings, accessibility is built-in, for instance there may be a sliding door instead of a revolving door. There will be an elevator somewhere. The only concern that I have with most modern buildings is that the adaptations, although now a part of the building, are still tucked away in corners or slotted in at the end of a hall. You may find a beautiful building with a wonderful open internal structure, with stairways and stairwells, waterfalls, trees, and ivy; and the elevator is in the darkest corner as far as possible from the main entrance on the ground floor. And on every successive floor the elevator may be near the garbage chute or the broom closet. The architects have followed the bylaws but the accent has been on following. First the building was designed

and then the accessibility bylaws were consulted and complied with. So you may find a beautiful building with, for example, accessible washrooms on the ground and 12th floors!

How do hidden adaptations apply to the communication context? The area where we are beginning to see a seamless integration of the needs of a nonspeaking person with the needs of his/her able-bodied speaking peers is in some computer software and applications. A nonspeaking person can communicate over a modem in exactly the same way as a speaking person (see Peter Lindsay's story in *Communicating Together* Volume 8, Number 2).

Integral Accessibility

Accessibility is an integral part of all physical spaces. Schools might have stairs on one side but have ramps on the other and an elevator in the centre. All doors can be designed to swing away or to be sliding doors. Plugs, door handles, taps, sockets, TV screens, computer monitors, video players, computer keyboards, switch consoles, battery chargers, electronic-mail systems can all be located so that they are accessible by walking and wheeling, for speaking and nonspeaking persons. They can all be designed into the environment as an integral and aesthetically pleasing array of options.

A person with a communication device need not be locked into one high tech option. A computer-based voice or graphic communication device should be able to communicate to any computer screen or any TV at any location where the user decides to communicate. The user should not be solely responsible for carting about his/her AAC technology. Maybe the communication partner should reciprocate and carry a tuned receiver or some component of AAC technology.

The European Manual

I mentioned earlier that there were three principles in the *European Manual* that I felt should be applied throughout rehabilitation and AAC and I will end with them here.

Principle One: INTEGRAL ACCESSIBILITY

"The built environment should be

arranged in such a way that it allows everybody to function in the most independent and natural way possible." (p.7 and p.20.)

An equivalent first principle of AAC might be:

"The integrated communication environment should be arranged in such a way that it allows everybody to communicate (and to acquire additional communication skills) in the most independent and natural way possible."

Principle Two: VISITABILITY

"A dwelling or other private [or public] place, like an office, is visitable if any visitor can reach the entrance and all facilities a visitor is normally allowed to use." (p.21)

I chose to retain the visitability aspect of Principle Two for the AAC version:

"A person using any type of communication system can go to any classroom, home or school area, or excursion site and join in communication like a speaking person." That includes being out in the rain or at poolside. It means in as well as out

of the wheelchair and of course in as well as outside the house.

Principle Three: ADAPTABILITY

"Adaptability is the physical and spatial capacity of houses or other individually [I would have added 'or collectively'] used areas to be rearranged easily whenever the need to do so occurs." (p.21)

The AAC equivalent is evident: "Adaptability allows the person's communication system and/or the environments in which that system is used to be adapted to special needs and circumstances, life, cultural, social or calendar events, and celebrations, and learning and living experiences."

Where are We?

In the teleconference, it was only when members of the audience asked questions that I realized how harsh, how unfriendly or unyielding this comparison actually seems to be. The AAC field is still far removed from an integrated communication environment. And I

implore everyone who heard my lecture or who reads this column to take this not as a criticism but as a challenge. I made the comparison because I liked and valued the attitude and the high degree of integration that was evident in the principles drawn from the European Manual. I am sure that the AAC field shares this attitude and that the technology will no doubt be made to bend to the wishes of the users, service providers, and technologists. □

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Single Switch Software

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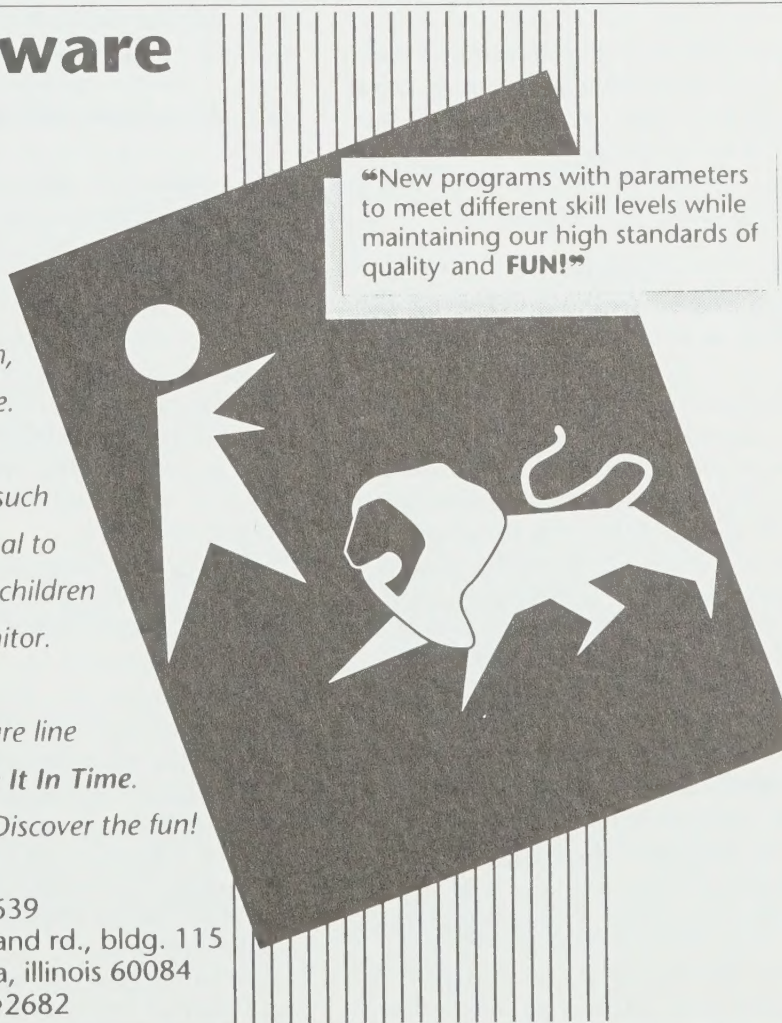
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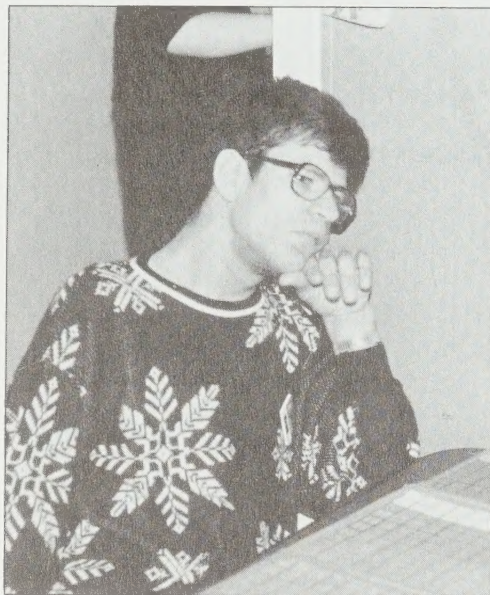
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ISAAC from a Consumer's Perspective

PAUL MARSHALL



Paul Marshall was the winner of the Hamilton Wentworth Communication Collective essay contest for consumers on augmentative communication. The prize was an expense paid trip to the 1990 ISAAC conference in Sweden. (See Communicating Together Volume 8, Number 2.) He prepared the following report on his trip.

It was a great honour for me to be a part of the ISAAC Fourth International Conference in Stockholm last summer. It is a privilege to be able to share with you some of the things I took away from the conference. When we think of an international conference, we can hardly fathom all the different ideas and different points of view of each person attending; an overflowing pool of knowledge. I think the trials of our daily learning are almost insignificant unless we can view and learn from the whole picture. Sure, I could tell you what I learned in each section of the conference about various things, but for me the general large picture was my learning opportunity.

When my friend, John, (the helper who went with me) and I walked around the displays, we always met someone very interesting, and gained

from the meeting. Sometimes we had lunch with someone, and shared different ideas. It seems to make the world much smaller when we realize their struggles, problems, goals and successes, are not all that different from our own.

I can remember one time when we were waiting for a train to go into Stockholm, we talked to a lady who was also attending the conference, and found she was very involved in her community with trying to better the educational system for handicapped students. She had a long list of degrees after her name. Well, a light in my head came on; I think education is a most important tool that makes a person's life more enriched so they are more able to serve their community. Can we as teachers and counsellors in society really see and hear the cries for help? Or are we too caught up in the trap of just building and maintaining a service? We all can fall into the business of trying to keep up-dated, trying to help people, but we also must see the individual person.

Learning from Different Cultures

The conference and its social gatherings offered opportunities to talk to so many people from different walks of life. We met people while we were going to or coming from the evening gatherings. We spent one of our evenings talking to two ladies from Jerusalem about our different cultures (until 2:00 a.m. and our alarm went off at 6:00 a.m.). It was great! We learned a lot from each other.

The conference opened John's eyes to the world of augmentative forms of communicating. He was very interested in the different equipment shown. We couldn't take in everything they offered at the conference, but the sessions we did attend were most interesting and informative.

Since John is a fulltime worker and I am a volunteer at Evergreen (a Yonge Street Mission for street youth in Toronto), we were interested in finding out something about that part of the Swedish culture.

We went on some walks in Stockholm and talked to people on this topic; we also found places where young people gathered. We stopped at a Social Services building and asked many questions about youth in trouble. Like Toronto, Stockholm is a large city. They have many kids from Finland coming to Stockholm looking for the "action". They have few kids living right on the street for months at a time, as we do in Canada. We found this part of our trip very interesting.

Memories for a Lifetime

This trip was really an education; it was my first time overseas. I found it fascinating to be in a different culture. Sweden is a big history book to me. It is full of very old buildings and little villages where the people try to maintain some of their old ways.

Both John and I really felt we were blessed. Our own friendship grew through that week. It was a trip we won't forget. We will always have our outstanding reflections of the trip to Sweden to look back on throughout our lives.

We as social beings need to communicate in order to survive, whether it is some form of augmentative communication or the old and dull way of communication — verbalizing. In the past several years, we have made many inroads in augmentative communicating, but much work still lies ahead. The progress that we are now making in this field will benefit many down the road. Opportunities such as the ISAAC International Conference, where we have this pool of overflowing knowledge that each person can share and hand over, will benefit others. There is nothing more meaningful or more rewarding than to know your experience is a stepping stone toward putting the pieces together in an individual life. To me, the conference had this flowing throughout. The ripples that flow from an event of this size are too large to comprehend. I am thankful to be the one who was given this chance to grow and learn more from the conference and the trip. □



Communicating in Ontario



A NEWSLETTER FOR EDUCATORS ABOUT AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION

March 1991

Smile ! You're on Polaroid Camera!

The Polaroid Education Program (PEP) is a unique approach to education through the lens of a camera, giving instant results. We all marvel at the ability of an instamatic camera to produce a picture within minutes of taking it. In the field of augmentative communication, this speed of production can take advantage of the many opportunities for communication instruction that occur naturally and spontaneously. How many times have you wished for an immediate way to represent something to your augmentative communicator, but didn't have the time to grab pencil, paper, symbol book, photocopier or your graphic artist to produce something instantly? Polaroid pictures can produce "instant symbols" until a commonly known graphic symbol is both available and learned. For cognitively low functioning students, polaroid photos can produce "symbols" that are very individualized.

Objects found in real life can turn theories into practical everyday applications when students study examples from their own environments. Even concepts such as big and little can be learned with the help of a camera.

A field trip to a place like the zoo to take photos of things big and little is a great learning experience.

Producing teaching materials for students who are using augmentative communication or have low reading levels can be quite time consuming. A file of your own polaroid pictures for use in recipes, art, math concepts, etc. could save many minutes of "cut and pasting".

The Polaroid Education Program conducts workshops for interested educators on site. Participants receive a free Polaroid 600 series camera and lesson activity books to use during the session. The program was developed by other educators and is presented by educators. Interested people can contact:

Sandy Mitchell
350 Carlingview Drive
Rexdale, Ontario M9W 5K6
Telephone:(416) 695-3680
or 1-800-268-6970

New P.A.L.L.S. ! VOIS160 by Phonic Ear

The new VOIS 160 by Phonic Ear gives professionals in the field of augmentative communication another option in the selection of speech output devices. The P.A.L.L.S. system (Programmer

Activated Level and Label Sequencing) is very "user friendly" with messages inputted using text to speech.

The system currently uses Smoothtalker, with DecTalk becoming available later this year. The programming allows the user to adjust pitch, volume, tone and speed even with individual words within a message, so now individual words within a message can have emphasis. When someone says "I need help! Come NOW!" the message may be interpreted as truly urgent.

The keyboard can be individually customized with target sizes varying from 104, 24, or 8 key layouts. Graphic systems familiar to the user can be used on customized overlays. This flexibility of customized overlays can be used to address the needs of a variety of cognitive abilities. A multilevel vocabulary approach to storage of vocabulary and phrases seems well suited to a classroom environment with its many themes and activities. P.A.L.L.S. has a dictionary of 1,400 pre-programmed words and phrases. It has a storage capacity of 64,000 entries available for user created messages.

The flexibility of the the P.A.L.L.S. system makes it an augmentative device worthy of our attention as we seek to find alternative speech output equipment that meets our students' needs.

RUTH HARRINGTON

Blissymbol Monitors

BCI now has nearly fifty symbol monitors in different parts of the world. These monitors work diligently to ensure that Blissymbols appearing in published materials and computer software are graphically correct. Monitors also fulfill the very important role of informing BCI about new materials under development, so that BCI can pass this information on to others.

New Ideas

In the next few issues of **Communicating Together** 'Blissymbol Talk' will present some of these wonderful new materials. Though they are not available in English, perhaps the ideas will motivate some of our readers to embark on similar projects.

A Traffic Training Program in Blissymbols for Electric Wheelchair Drivers

One of the most innovative projects was sent to BCI from Britt Carlsson of Sweden. It is an attractive, twenty-eight page, traffic training program for those learning to drive electric wheelchairs and needing to become street-wise. It was written by Ingalill Grundberg and translated into Blissymbols by Britt Carlsson. Excellent photographs, demonstrating some of the rules, enhance many of the pages. These were taken by Raija Ahlvik and Tone Linderskold. Appealing illustrations, drawn by Chris Lundin Mattsson, appear throughout to support the Swedish text and Blissymbols.

Sentences appear to be simple and concise making the book easy to read. Of course, not understanding Swedish, my knowledge of Blissymbolics was put to the test, but with the help of the photos and illustrations, I got the important messages.

This is a book that invites the reader to participate. It is a workbook which even has a reward at the end! Successful completion entitles the reader to a



Körkort or Driver's License.

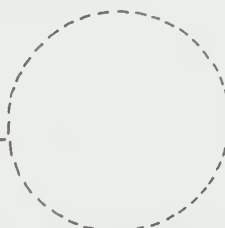
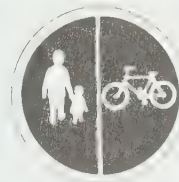
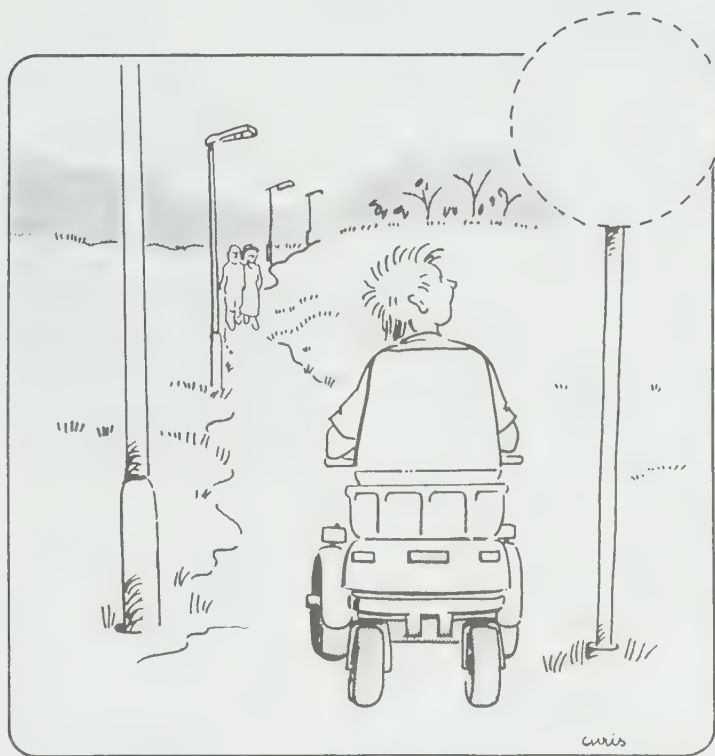
Creators designed the book with the reader in mind. The simple tasks in the book can be carried out by those with limited hand function or with hand over hand help. The spiral binding and durable paper make the pages easy to turn.

SYMBOLS RELATED TO WHEELCHAIR EQUIPMENT & DRIVING

reflectors	rear view mirror	seat belt	lamps
(combine indicator + bent arrow + light + thing indicator + plural indicator + combine indicator)	(combine indicator + mirror + back + combine indicator)	(combine indicator + linear thing + to sit + protection + combine indicator)	(electric light + thing indicator + plural indicator)

traffic	crossing	road	street	curb
(many + car)	(combine indicator + across + road + combine indicator)	(ground[extended line] + pointer + car)	(ground + pointer + house)	(ground + pointer, to curb, + house)

Arbetsuppgift



Blissymbols used herein are derived from the symbols described in the work *Semantography*, original copyright © C. K. Bliss, 1949.

September 1982, C. K. Bliss granted an exclusive, non-cancellable and perpetual, world-wide license to Blissymbolics Communication International, to provide standards for the application of Blissymbols, for use by handicapped persons and persons having communication, language and learning difficulties.

CATHY FAIRLEY

The Paraphrase is written for those who are moving into traditional orthography. It offers an independent reading opportunity for the growing reader. The Paraphrase is written by Cathy Fairley, former consultant, Easter Seal Communication Institute.

From Blissymbols to Poetry

This story about Leo Leppälä was written by Gitta Lonnqvist, Leo's friend from Samfundet Folkhälsan Centre in Finland. The original appeared in *Communicating Together* Volume 8, Number 4, 1990.

Leo Leppälä is twenty-seven years old. He was born in Finland, but lived in Sweden until he was twelve years old. He has cerebral palsy.

Leo and his family moved back to Finland, but by now, Leo's language was Swedish. There was no special school in Finland for disabled children who spoke Swedish. He went back to Sweden twice a year for therapy.

Leo was not able to learn to speak. When Leo was fourteen, we heard about Blissymbols and I showed them to Leo. His first sentence was "I will eat". He learned symbols very quickly and soon had two hundred symbols and then five hundred symbols. He loved to use the combine symbol to make new ones.

In 1987, I got an Apple computer and Leo used it. Later he got his own computer with a speech synthesizer. He uses it to write poetry in Blissymbols. Now he belongs to a group of poets in Finland. Other poets help put Swedish words to Leo's symbols.

Leo now lives in a home with eight disabled people. He wants to help other children who use Blissymbols and their families. □



Leo Leppälä using a light pointer to communicate.

Someone to Receive the Message

BARBARA REID



Barbara Reid is a consultant with the Easter Seal Communication Institute. She has been involved in the field of augmentative communication since 1976, first in England and then in Canada. She has worked in research and training as well as consulting, and has co-authored two books and several articles on augmentative communication.

In the late 1970's, when colleagues and I from the Thomas Coram Research Unit first began to offer in-service training in AAC, we found a three-point plan which helped to introduce the communication process. The key elements were something to say (knowledge, preferences), a reason for saying it (understanding the purpose of communication, motivation) and a way of saying it (the words, signs, symbols or behaviours that will convey the message). These three steps were easy to remember, and provided front line staff with a useful framework for informal assessment, program planning, and a way of understanding some program failures. But as we all gained more experience, it became clear that we had to look beyond the nonspeaking people themselves for planning and problem-solving. The context in which a nonspeaking person communicates can be as important as that person's own skill. The plan gained a fourth element — someone

to receive the message (Yoder and Calculator, 1981).

We all need communication partners who are trained to receive our messages. English speakers need partners who understand the English language, eye gazers need partners who can understand their encoding systems and read words which accompany symbols, and signers need partners who can understand the hand shapes which they "utter".

Providing sign language users with appropriate communication partners has been an important challenge for AAC providers. Many advocate an aided (graphic) system for community use, so that nonspeaking people can communicate with untutored store or restaurant staff in their language — a written word which accompanies a symbol. But signing is still the primary communication mode for thousands of nonspeaking people, especially people with developmental handicaps who attend segregated schools or classrooms, live in group homes or work in sheltered employment.

Three articles in the March, 1990 issue of *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* deal with teaching signs to staff. The first, by Grove and Walker, describes the history and current status of the Makaton Vocabulary Development Project. The core of the Makaton Vocabulary is a collection of 350 concepts, arranged in stages, which can be expressed in speech, sign or graphic symbols. Grove and Walker estimate that 30,000 "interactive partners" had been trained by 1983.

Makaton's Success

Organization is an important part of Makaton's success. Its vocabulary structure organizes concepts into small groups or stages (about 38 concepts in each stage), and within each stage the selection of concepts allows for a number of language functions and some meaningful combinations (e.g. "Where Mummy?" and "Biscuit please" or "Give biscuit, please" from Stage One).

The Makaton Vocabulary Develop-

ment Project is also well organized, with a network of regional representatives throughout the country who are trained to support users and give local workshops. Materials can be developed centrally and quickly disseminated through the network.

The workshop format itself is another factor in Makaton's success. For workshops at the basic, or "user" level, professionals and caregivers come for one day and learn signs for the first two stages of the vocabulary, along with teaching tips and general information on use of the vocabulary in everyday life.

While the Makaton Vocabulary has received praise as a system for training staff, it has been criticized as too rigid and limited to meet individual users' needs. Grove and Walker respond to their critics by pointing out that each AAC user need only be taught concepts from each stage which are relevant to him or her, and that concepts can be re-ordered across stages if necessary. As well, an open-ended ninth stage is included, which is meant to contain any concepts needed by the user and not present in the core vocabulary. But even critics of Makaton concede that, as a staff training vehicle, its workshop format and eight stage core vocabulary are highly successful.

The Working Party Approach

The remaining two articles in *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* deal with local rather than national programs. Loeding, Zangari and Lloyd describe "A 'working party' approach to planning in-service training in manual signs for an entire public school staff". The school has thirteen regular education classrooms, plus one classroom each for students with physical disabilities, hearing impairments, multiple disabilities and severe-to-profound disabilities. Manual signs were being used with the hearing impaired class, and had been recommended for a number of students in the other three classes. School staff worked collaboratively

with faculty and students from Purdue University to select vocabulary, design a training program and prepare materials. All school staff were invited to submit vocabulary; this yielded a total of 1,063 items. The initial list was reduced nearly ten-fold by combining synonyms and similar forms of the same word, omitting the distinction between nouns and verbs (e.g. teaching only one sign for both 'eat' and 'food'), and choosing the most frequently mentioned items. The final list of 122 signs was taught over four sessions.

The working party also chose discussion topics to accompany the sign training. These included ways to communicate with severely disabled students, the use of modified signs, and the importance of facial expression. Support materials included drawings of the signs (identical to overhead transparencies used during training), homework activities for practising the signs, and videotapes of the sign vocabulary.

The signing workshops, a product of many months of careful planning, were attended by all teaching, administrative and support staff in the school. Pre-workshop questionnaires had indicated that most personnel were interested in learning to sign, and participation in the four workshop sessions was good. Loeding et al. credit their success to the working party approach to planning, which involved school personnel in all stages and gave the school a sense of ownership in the training process.

Sign of the Week Approach

While both the Grove and Walker and Loeding et al. articles describe training programs which staff have enjoyed and learned from, neither paper looks at the effect of sign training on day to day sign use. The third article, by Spragale and Micucci, goes beyond the training stage to examine sign use by direct care staff in a residential setting. Spragale and Micucci had found that workshop formats like those described in the previous two articles were not effective in promoting day-to-day sign use by direct care staff. Staff were overwhelmed by learning a large number of signs at once, and had trouble generalizing from the classroom setting to their work settings. Spragale and Micucci's alter-

native to the workshop format was "Signs of the Week: A functional approach to manual sign training". The program involves monthly meetings of direct care staff and a speech-language pathologist to select eight vocabulary items and discuss the importance and implementation of a signing environment. At the first meeting, the group selects a Signs of the Week representative. This person documents decisions about vocabulary which are made at the meetings, displays the appropriate Signs of the Week drawings at key points around the residence, and monitors record-keeping for the program. The representative also gives new staff an orientation to the Signs of the Week program.

The vocabulary is not pre-arranged like the Makaton Vocabulary, but selected month by month from suggestions made by the group. Decisions about vocabulary are based on factors similar to the Loeding et al. approach — frequency of use, diversity of language functions, and appropriateness to the residential context. At the monthly meeting, the speech-language pathologist demonstrates the eight signs chosen for that month, and these are reinforced by drawings posted each week by the Signs of the Week representative. Staff are encouraged to monitor each other's sign use, and report on their own progress. The speech-language pathologist visits each site once a week to reinforce the program and record the number of signs used by staff.

Spragale and Micucci caution that their outcome data are subject to bias, because the measures were designed for feedback rather than for scientific research. Nevertheless, the trend is very encouraging. Over a three month period, the average number of signs used rose steadily as they were learned, from a baseline of two to a high of thirty. The number of signs used reached a plateau at about thirty, with slight overall gains over the next six months. The authors offer two explanations for the plateau effect. New staff may reduce the average sign use statistics. It is also possible that the first thirty to forty signs chosen were the most functional ones for that setting, and that subsequent choices would not be used frequently enough to affect the

average number of signs used. But more important is their observation that after nine months of the Signs of the Week program, they were able to maintain staff interest and keep the level of use up to thirty different signs per week. Like Loeding et al. they cite staff involvement in all phases of the program as a key factor in its success.

Although the three articles describe diverse approaches to training teaching and direct care staff, three themes run through all of the programs. All programs sought to organize the material to meet the learning requirements of both communication partners and nonspeaking students or residents. All programs taught more than the signs themselves — they gave staff some background in the goals of a communication program and some materials or skills which would help them teach the signs to nonspeaking people. Finally, they all provided drawings of the signs which were directly related to the teaching sessions, and which were more readily accessed than a signing dictionary. All of the authors reinforce what many of this column's readers will already know — that a signing environment is a vital factor in the success of this communication mode for nonspeaking people. But it is clear that the environment will not succeed if it is left to maintain itself in a haphazard fashion. □

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The Need for Standards in the Support Service System

CAROL LYNN



Carol Lynn has been involved in providing attendant care to disabled people for many years. She has always been sensitive to the needs and rights of those who are not always able to advocate for themselves and has frequently spoken out on their behalf. In this article she again expresses some concerns about standards for caregivers of people who are disabled, especially those who are nonspeaking. We hope this will stimulate comments from readers, and we offer Communicating Together as a forum for exchange of ideas, especially with reference to people who are nonspeaking.

I have a friend who is disabled and nonspeaking, who lives in a support service project. This past summer, during a picnic at a mutual friend's cottage, she was taken out of her wheelchair, and the insert was removed. Under the insert, a four inch thick foam seat and back covered with nylon material, was found a writhing mass of cockroaches. The insert was found to be infested all the way through, and had to be incinerated at Hugh MacMillan Rehabilitation Centre, where a new one was constructed.

Unbelievable? It happened.

I have another friend, again a non-

speaking disabled person, who lives in a different project. One Friday evening, after a particularly stressful week, she asked her attendant to pour her a glass of peach schnapps, which she keeps on hand in her room.

She was given a glass of rubbing alcohol.

Being nonspeaking, she couldn't protest when the cup was put to her lips and she got her first taste. She has no use of her arms, and could not push it away. She tried to turn her head away, but the cup was pressed more firmly to her lips.

Could the attendant not tell the difference between the smell of peach schnapps and rubbing alcohol? Could the attendant not read the label?

My friend was rushed to the hospital, where her stomach was emptied, and she was held overnight for observation. She will spend the rest of her life being terrified of what the next mistake might be.

Authorities Rarely Informed

These are not isolated incidents. They may be extreme examples, but having worked in a number of support projects through the years, I have seen a lot of low quality service being provided to clients. I have witnessed verbal abuse, mental abuse, and physical neglect of clients. I have seen clients injured because an improperly trained attendant refused to follow the client's instructions.

These kinds of scenarios are virtually encouraged in a system that is poorly run. I would go so far as to say that they are often unavoidable in a system that is poorly run. Most of these incidents are hushed up at the staff or supervisory level. They happen behind closed doors. Very rarely do Boards of Directors or even persons at an administrative level ever become aware of these incidents.

Another incident of several years ago comes to mind. It happened during the night shift with an organization where I was employed. A female staff member was going into a double shift. She was exhausted. She had worked several double

shifts in the two or three weeks prior to that night.

She placed a client on the toilet around midnight. This was a very disabled client who was just able to balance herself on the toilet. She could do nothing else while there. To leave a telephone near her in the washroom would not have been feasible in her case.

The exhausted staff member forgot the client. The male staff member working with her knew nothing about it. That client somehow managed to stay conscious and balanced for more than six hours. If she had fallen, the nature of her disability made it possible that she would have been killed.

Fortunately, a tenant in the apartment below her got up around 6:30 a.m. for work, and when she went into her bathroom, she heard the cries for help above her. Knowing that the person above her was a disabled client receiving support services, she phoned the lounge.

If she had not been heard by the person downstairs, that client would not have seen a staff member until 10:00 a.m. when she had a booking to get up. The likelihood of her being alive at 10:00 was slim. She was on the verge of collapse when finally rescued.

Again, the Board of Directors was never made aware of that incident.

There may be support service projects in the system that are providing good services for clients, but in my years of working in several projects, I have encountered only one organization that is providing high quality services for its clients. That organization has a mission statement. It reads as follows: "To provide client directed attendant services so that physically disabled adults can live independently in the community."

I think we can safely assume that most support service projects were founded on that premise. We can assume that at some point in time, that was the mission of almost every support service project that opened.

A Chain with Interlocking Links

What happened? How did unreliable and incompetent staff become so

widespread? How did double and triple shifts become the norm? How did the uncaring attitude and lack of concern seep in?

My ideal view of a support service project is that of a chain, with each link interlocking and interacting with the next link. The first link is the funding body. In Ontario, it is the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The next link is the Board of Directors of the facility. Next comes the link of administration, after that supervisory staff, then front-line staff, and clients.

Notice that in a chain, each link interlocks and interacts with the link before it and after it. That's what makes it a chain.

But that's an ideal view of a support service project. The reality is that all of the links are present, but most are not interlocked or interacting. Even if a couple of the links are interacting, let us say the board and administration, that still does not form a chain. The other links remain separate.

The organization I mentioned earlier that is so successful is so for a reason, not just by chance. It is successful because those involved recognize the need for standards, and they apply them at every level of the organization — at the board level, at the administrative level, at the supervisory level, and the front-line level.

As a service provider, I am extremely concerned about the quality of services that I see being provided for disabled clients.

It is my belief that there is a great need for change in the whole system, and it is my belief that the time for that change is now. □

Editor's Note:

Readers who would like to share their views on and experiences with attendant care are invited to write to Carol Lynn c/o *Communicating Together*, Suite 200, 250 Ferrand Drive, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada M3C 3P2.

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Beginning AAC in Zimbabwe

INEZ HUSSEY

Inez Hussey is a Speech Correctionist with the National Society for the Blind and Physically Handicapped in Zimbabwe. Some months ago she wrote to Barbara Collier, co-chair of the Developing Countries Committee of ISAAC with the following account of her experiences using Blissymbols and picture communication boards at a rehabilitation centre in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Barbara shared the article with Communicating Together and we present it here.

At King George VI Rehabilitation Centre in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, we have 110 children in the school, fifty-six of whom have cerebral palsy. During recent years we have had more severely involved children referred to us, perhaps as people become more aware that some help is possible. As a result, it has been necessary to develop an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) program because of the increasing numbers of children with no speech at all.

We began the program four years ago with two children. One was a very bright boy, Sijabuliso, who became mobile while at the centre and who used excellent signs to indicate his needs. His desire to communicate was the start of a Bliss program. He greedily learned all new symbols and learned quickly to combine them if the necessary symbol was not on his board. He was also quick to suggest many new symbols that he felt would be useful. He ended up with a board of 340 symbols and began working on the more difficult aspects of language, i.e. verb tenses.

Sijabuliso was given a board with symbols on each side and covered with cleaned x-ray plates. This he carried with him to all lessons and home. Unfortunately, little use was made of the board at home. As Sijabuliso progressed through the school and learned to read, he has grown away from the use of sym-

bols, using a word board instead. He feels that people will be more willing to communicate with him if there are words rather than symbols on his board. He has also begun to write, despite his great handicap, any words that are not on his board. Suddenly we realised that he has never really been taught to spell so a whole new world of learning has opened as he battles with spelling. Sijabuliso has always found some way to communicate.

Our second Bliss child was Daniel, who started at about three years of age. He was given a board similar to Sijabuliso's but with much larger symbols reinforced with an album of family photographs.

He also picked up the basics quickly and has now progressed to thirty symbols. He uses his board avidly when telling his news in the morning. Unfortunately, Daniel does not have the easy going nature of Sijabuliso and goes through periods when he does not really want to learn anything, so progress is not as rapid. As he gets older we hope this will improve and he will be more able to see the need to communicate.

Bliss as a Tool to Speech

A third child, Lister, was brought into our nursery class some years ago. She drooled constantly and had no speech at all. She was a rather unprepossessing child who tended to keep in the background, and development was minimal. She was started on a Bliss chart, starting as usual with the key words of family, body parts, etc. As the pressure was taken off the teaching of formal speech, she relaxed and began to see the need to 'talk' to people.

As the Bliss progressed, so, as a sideline, did her speech. Now she only uses her Bliss board if really necessary. Her speech is nearly always intelligible and her drooling vastly improved.

It was after this success that we began to use Bliss with children in the early years just to give them the confidence to move on and 'try' speech. A little girl, after a series of traumatic heart operations and damaged vocal chords, refused to

even open her mouth. After a few weeks of Bliss and lots of loving, she now talks non-stop, even though voice quality is impaired.

Since then we have tried various other methods of AAC as the need has arisen. Two children, Jessica and Francis, slightly older when starting, and perhaps more cognitively impaired, were given picture charts instead of symbols. Francis is well away with speech now and only uses a chart if really necessary. Jessica loves her pictures and is able to tell basic news, shows her requirements and shows the teacher that she does understand the story. The pictures used are approximately 35mm by 35mm in size and of good illustrative quality. As time goes on we will try symbols for Jessica, based on the Rebus system, for reading purposes. These appear to be closer to actual pictures than Bliss and easier for a child like Jessica to grasp. Using these symbols on a special reading chart, she will be able to show her teacher that she is 'reading' and understanding.

It is unlikely that Jessica will ever develop speech and so AAC is vitally important to her. Hopefully, as she learns to read, she will be able to use a word chart as pictures are rather limiting to "full" communication.

Another child, just started on a picture chart, is Mythokozisi, who is deaf and has athetoid cerebral palsy. He is a very keen child, desperate to join in with everything, but with very difficult handicaps. He had to be shown what even basic communication was. When first shown a picture board, he tended just to point at all the pictures with no real understanding. Obviously with him, the pictures had to have 'real' meaning. As he is very keen on food, it was decided to start him at a basic level with pictures of familiar food. At the usual one picture at a time rate, he now has six different food pictures on his chart and can now show, with great pride, what he has for tea.

There are several new children enrolled in the school this year who will need AAC if only for a limited

period. The method to be used will depend on their ability. After our experiences with Sijabuliso, we wonder if Bliss is the answer. Too many people shy away from using something they are not familiar with. With pictures and words people feel at home and more ready to 'listen' to the child. Blissymbols are clear and positively ingenious if you study them, but they are not immediately obvious to an outsider. The decision of what system to use must be very much a personal choice and what works best for the children in your care.

I find AAC work very rewarding as there are very few children who don't respond in some way to this new ability to communicate — the ability that most of us take completely for granted.

Suddenly to be able to ask for a 'biscuit' or to tell the news that you 'played with your doll' or just to indicate that today you are 'cross' is so important to a child who has been ignored for the early years.

I have really enjoyed becoming involved with ISAAC as new ideas and encouragement are so important. I look forward to hearing from others with similar problems and new solutions!□

About the Publisher

The Easter Seal Communication Institute (ESCI), formerly the Blissymbolics Communication Institute, has worked since its inception toward enhancing the lives of nonspeaking people. Now operating as a department of The Easter Seal Society, Ontario, ESCI focuses on supporting augmentative communicators and their families and the professionals who work with them through its strategic goals.

1) Using a collaborative consultative model, to develop and implement services to improve the quality of education for nonspeaking children and young adults.

2) To educate, inform and increase the awareness of the community about the needs and abilities of nonspeaking children and young adults.

3) To contribute to and participate in the growing field of augmentative and alternative communication.

4) While supporting a number of communication systems, to recognize the system of Blissymbolics as a valuable means to advance augmentative and alternative communication.

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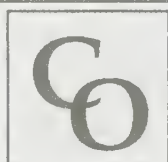
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Relief Bliss, A Low Tech Technique

POLLY EDMAN

Polly Edman is a designer and producer of Tactile Graphics in Djursholm, Sweden. Normally the materials she creates are pictures, maps and diagrams for school children in Sweden. Some time ago, she received a request to produce some examples of relief Blissymbols from Britt Carlsson, BCI affiliate in Sweden, for use with children who are blind and multiply disabled. At Britt's urging she submitted the following article to Communicating Together.

It is difficult enough for any of us to try to make ourselves understood in everyday life, and indeed, it must be even more frustrating for those who cannot use their spoken language. There are countless numbers of people who today find themselves in just this situation. Some people depend on Blissymbols to communicate their feelings, comments and directions. They are some of the multi-handicapped people who have found an answer to inter-personal contact. Unfortunately, there are more people still searching for a solution to their isolation, and among these people are multi-handicapped people with visual impairment.

Could the Blissymbol system be made available to the blind? I had this question put to me a few years ago when I produced relief pictures, maps and diagrams for Swedish blind students in grades 1 through 9. In order to answer that question I made some relief Bliss cards. If these cards could be tested by several multi-handicapped blind students who had had sufficient Bliss instruction, I felt that they would fill the same function as cards made for visually able Bliss readers, providing that they were actually able to feel the card and understand its symbol. There is a world of difference between pointing to a symbol on a Blissboard and feeling a symbol with fingers, toes or tongue.

Ten cards were selected at random: bowl, car, bus, mother, father,

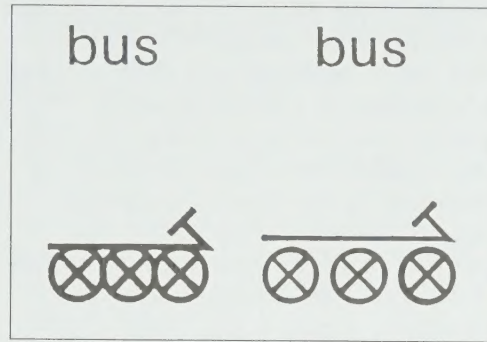


Fig. 1 original card altered card

package, visit, happy, agitated, out or outside of. The cards were 10cm x 10cm (4" x 4"). The simple abstract forms used in the Blissymbol system seem to be quite easy for a single-handicapped blind reader to understand. However, several of the designs must be altered to accommodate touch-reading. For example, the wheels in the bus symbol must be separated from the body of the bus to simplify form identification (see figure 1).

Converging shapes and perpendicular and parallel lines in a symbol for visually handicapped readers must be separated by a 3mm (0.12") gap to allow the reader's fingers to adjust to the form change within the design. Without this change, the symbol may feel like a plate of spaghetti. An illustration of the "stop-gap" technique is the card "visit" (see figure 2). The arrow which pierces the house is an

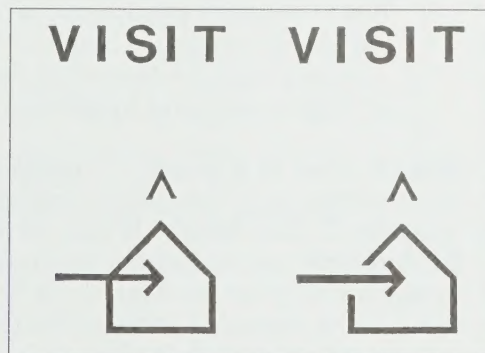


Fig. 2 original card altered card

important element. Consequently, the line above and below the shaft of the arrow should be stopped to allow the arrow to pass freely. This will enable the reader to understand the arrow as a complete unit and not an integral part of the house symbol.

Some lines can be made thicker to give them prominence. In the following series of symbol, the person symbol is repeated in the various combinations (see figure 3 — the actual cards would be 4" x 4" in size). By making this figure more dominant in each card, the symbol user will become aware of this figure repetition and learn its relationship to other forms more readily. There are two methods for mass-producing relief cards:

1. Thin plastic cards made from a relief master in a vacuum forming machine, often called the Thermoform process.
2. Thin paper cards printed on microcapsule paper and swelled to 1-1.5mm height in an infrared heater.

Displaying Relief Symbols

The size of these cards, 4" x 4", or any symbol large enough for the comprehension of a visually impaired person, inhibits making a complete relief Blissboard with these large symbols. The board would be enormous! A board with a desired selection of symbols could be made, however. Perhaps the cards could be used in a box in some sort of card catalog system, or mounted on a wheel similar to a telephone and address register, or spiral-bound in a book. The cards could also be used in connection with the talking Blissboard, "Blisstalk". This is an electronic, microprocessor controlled communication board with built-in speech module for use with standard Blissymbols, pictures and words. It can write as well as talk and has the capacity of containing one to three languages: English, French, Spanish or Swedish. Blisstalk is available from the Rehab Centre, Box 2092, 191 02 Sollentuna, Sweden (see story on page 3).

Experienced people who have worked with the standard Swedish Bliss charts have found that the ordered arrangement of symbols is a great help in locating and remembering their positions. This is a great help if the blind reader is capable

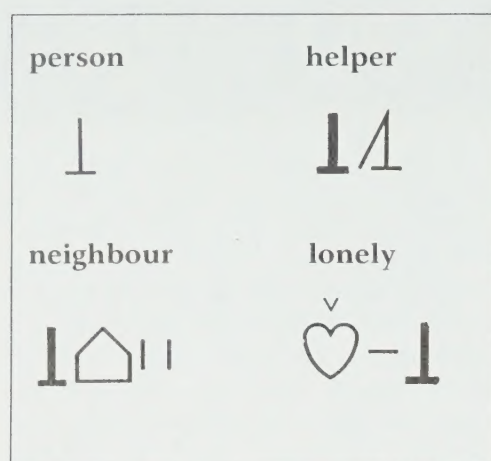


Figure 3

of remembering the position of a particular set of functions on the chart! The actual symbol area on Blisstalk is comparable to that of a standard Swedish Bliss chart with 2cm x 2cm squares. Since this space is not large enough for a discernable relief form, the approximate position of the symbol would, to some extent, have to be memorized. However, the large Bliss cards could enable the reader to feel the symbol in question and with some experience and a great deal of help, he or she may be able to produce correct audible output from Blisstalk.

There is another way to use the cards with Blisstalk and that is to reprogram the square size to accommodate 4" x 4" cards. This change is easily made and would enable the symbols to be fitted into the reprogrammed area containing three rows of five symbols each.

Forming Bliss Sentences in Relief

A teacher in the United States wanted to try the relief cards with her student. She said that they worked very well, but she found the cards unruly and impossible to place in a line to form a sentence. The cards would not stay put in the sentence line unless they were fastened down to a background material. Touch reading with hands or feet will spread the cards as soon as the visually impaired reader begins to use them. The teacher found that the only way she could make a successful sentence was to glue string on a board to form the desired Blissymbols. She felt this was too tedious and time-consuming. I showed her how to use a raised-line drawing board, which seemed to solve her problem. Within minutes the teacher could converse with the

student as well as with any sighted multi-handicapped student.

Each country seems to have its own design of the reusable drawing board. They all do the same job and basically they consist of a thin rubber sheet fastened to a firm backing of cardboard, plastic or wood. This pad is covered by a removable and disposable film of plastic which is fastened to the board by clamps, screws, tape or — as in Sweden — slipped over the board muff-fashion. A ballpoint pen, pencil or stylus produces a raised line when drawn over the plastic film. The drawing technique used is limited to simple linear diagrams and is ideal for drawing Blissymbols in any size suitable to the student's individual needs. Unfortunately, however, errors cannot be erased. The drawing boards and plastic sheets are available from RPH-SYN, Tomtebodavagen 11, 171 64 Solna, Sweden and from R.N.I.B., 224-6-8 Great Portland Street, London W1N 6AA, England.

It is not expected that the multi-handicapped blind student can hold

a ballpoint pen by himself and form Blissymbols on the drawing board. However, the board provides an effective and quick way for the teacher, parent or friend to make contact with the student. If the student can feel the relief symbolizes what he or she wants, does or feels, then a big step has been taken.

Since these visually impaired students do not have a spoken language, their ability to spell is limited and consequently they are unable to use Braille, the usual relief language of the blind. Thus, the Bliss system provides some hope that they, too, may be able to make themselves understood. But research, experimentation and testing must be done before relief Bliss becomes a product available to all who would be able to use it. □

Editor's note:

For more information about relief symbols, readers may write to Polly Edman, Bravallavagen 13 H, S-182 62 Djursholm, Sweden.



StoryBliss 1.0

Story Bliss (© 1989 BCI) consists of two programs for the Macintosh™ computer: **BlissReader** and **BlissWriter**. With BlissReader, a Blissymbol user uses a single switch and scanning menus to read stories.

BlissReader users can:

- select the story of their choice
- have the story read aloud while the text being read is high-lighted
- repeat favourite passages or illustrations as often as they wish
- choose the graphic setting desired (Blissymbols alone, words alone or both words and symbols)

BlissWriter is a program used to create stories with text, Blissymbols and animation formats for BlissReader. Text is typed in and "chunked". This breaks it into phrases to be associated with Blissymbols. Each chunk can be hidden independently (symbols or words) and repeated independently by the Macintalk™ speech synthesizer. Individual words can also be repeated independently. To include Blissymbols in a story being written with BlissWriter, a third program, **AccessBliss** is required.

For More Information or to Order StoryBliss and AccessBliss

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

ESCI Special Interest Seminars

The Easter Seal Communication Institute (ESCI) holds a series of seminars throughout the year on a variety of topics related to the application of augmentative communication. These are held in the ESCI Resource Room, 250 Ferrand Drive, Don Mills, Ontario.

Inquiries are invited, as well, from organizations wishing to host a seminar in their own facility.

The Spring/Summer Schedule for 1991:

- Orientation to Boardmaking Technology. A two hour evening session. April 9, 1991.

- Using Interactive Games to Promote Early Communication. March 25, 1991.

Presenter: Maggie Axford, Speech Language Pathologist, Frontenac Board of Education.

- Selecting Graphics for Communication Boards. April 11, 1991.

- Social Skills and Augmentative Communication Users at the Elementary and Secondary Level. April 22, 1991.

Presenter: Maggie Axford, Speech Language Pathologist, Frontenac Board of Education.

- Bliss in a Day. April 30, 1991.

Presenter: Shirley McNaughton

- Blissymbols: Facilitating Language Retrieval in Aphasia. May 1, 1991.

Presenter: Linda Sawyer Woods, Speech Language Pathologist, Ottawa Civic Hospital.

- A Day After Bliss. May 2, 1991. (For those who have previously taken Bliss in a Day, Blissymbol Elementary Workshop, or completed the Independent Study Program)

Presenter: Shirley McNaughton.

- Blissymbol Elementary Workshop. May 29-31, 1991.

- For fees and further information contact:
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Telephone: (416) 421-8377, ex. 2205

69th Annual CEC Convention

In Atlanta, Georgia

- April 1-5, 1991

"Yesterday's Dreams, Tomorrow's Directions"

Contact: The Council for Exceptional Children, Conventions, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1589 U.S.A.

Telephone: (703) 620-3660

The Ontario Association for Teachers of the Mentally Retarded

In Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario

- April 25-27, 1991

"Realism in the Nineties"

Contact: Dana Currie, Centennial Public School

141 Amos Avenue Waterloo, ON, Canada N2L 2W8

Telephone: (519) 885-5660

Symposium for Teachers of Students with Physical Disabilities

In Toronto, Ontario

- April 26, 1991

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Contact: Ms Judy Bowles, Hugh MacMillan Rehabilitation Centre, 350 Rumsey Road, Toronto, ON, Canada M4G 1R8

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Canadian Association of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists

In Montreal, Quebec

- April 24-27, 1991

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Fifth Canadian Congress of Rehabilitation

In Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

- May 26-29, 1991

"Science, Dignity, Opportunity"

Contact: Deborah Loosemore, Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled, Suite 801, 45 Sheppard Ave. E., Toronto, ON, Canada M2N 5W9

Telephone: (416) 250-7490

RESNA 14th Annual Conference

In Kansas City, Missouri

- June 21-26, 1991

Contact: Susan Leone, RESNA, 1101 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Suite 700, Washington D.C. 20036 U.S.A.

Telephone: (202) 857-1199

Independence/Autonomie 92

In Vancouver, British Columbia

- April 22-25, 1992

"Self-determination by Persons with Disabilities"

International Congress and Exposition on Disability

Contact: Independence/Autonomie 92

Suite 200, 1190 Melville Street, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6E 3W1
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Third Annual Summer Institute on Augmentative Communication

In Lincoln, Nebraska

- June 10-21, 1991

The course, held at The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, will be co-taught by David Beukelman and Pat Mirenda and address a mode for assessment and intervention of school-aged individuals with severe communication disorders. Registration deadline is April 5, 1991.

Contact: Nancy Brown, 202 Barkley Memorial Centre, University of Nebraska - Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68583-00732 U.S.A.

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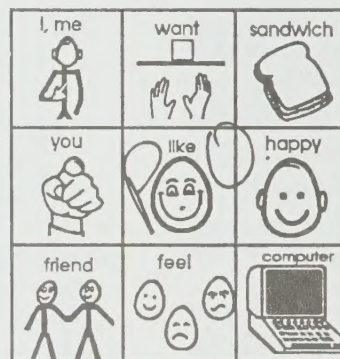
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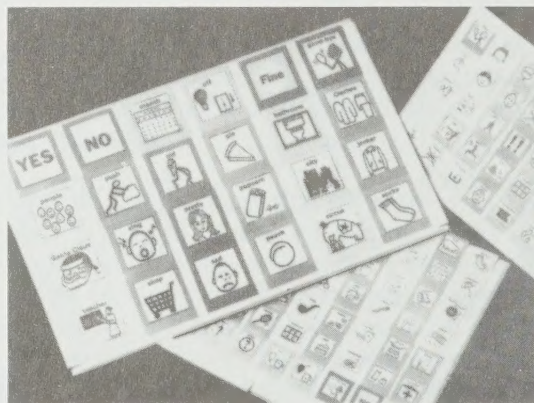
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